



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

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### **Naabik'íyáti' Committee supports FirstNet first responder program and receives request for support from Phoenix Indian Center**

**WINDOW ROCK** – During Thursday's Naabik'íyáti' Committee meeting, committee members approved Legislation No. 0302-17, supporting the recent decisions by the governors of Arizona and New Mexico to opt-in to the FirstNet emergency first responder network system that aims to deliver specialized wireless broadband services to assist emergency first responders. In addition, the legislation requests the state of Utah to also opt-in to the federal program.

Legislation sponsor Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. (Low Mountain, Many Farms, Nazlini, Tachee/Blue Gap, Tselani/Cottonwood), has long advocated for the acceptance and implementation of the FirstNet program to strengthen telecommunication infrastructure on the Navajo Nation to improve emergency response efforts, particularly in rural areas.

The federal program was established in 2012 by Congress, which is designed to deliver a nationwide broadband network dedicated to public safety, to strengthen public safety users' communications capabilities enabling them to respond more quickly and effectively to accidents, disasters, and emergencies. States have the option of whether or not to opt-in to the program.

Delegate Begay has requested to meet with the governors of Arizona and New Mexico to ensure that the Navajo Nation takes an active role in planning and implementing to make the program effective across the 27,000 square-miles of the Navajo Nation, and to urge the governor of Utah to opt-in to the program as well.

The Naabik'íyáti' Committee unanimously approved the legislation by a vote of 16-0. The committee serves as the final authority for the bill.

During Thursday's meeting, the committee also received a report in which officials with the Phoenix Indian Center highlighted the many services that their staff offers to the over 25,000 Navajo people who reside in Maricopa County, which includes the city of Phoenix.

The Phoenix Indian Center is a non-profit organization that assists thousands of Navajo residents in Phoenix with services including educational resources, cultural enrichment, and community engagement services. Additionally, the center offers Navajo language and culture classes,

seasonal stories and culture nights, case management and intake services, financial emergency assistance, skill building, resume writing, and substance abuse and suicide prevention services.

CEO Patricia Hibbeler stated that the Phoenix Indian Center is seeking the Navajo Nation Council's support for a grant application that requests approximately \$148,000 to be included in the Navajo Nation's FY2018 Comprehensive Budget, to help continue operations and to continue offering services to Navajo people.

Council Delegate Otto Tso (Tó Nanees Dizi) said he supports the services offered by the Phoenix Indian Center, adding that the Navajo Nation should also look at options to provide support and assistance to similar programs in other cities with high Navajo populations such as Albuquerque and Salt Lake City.

Council Delegate Kee Allen Begay, Jr. informed the officials with the Phoenix Indian Center that he is willing to sponsor legislation to request the funding from the Nation's Unreserved, Undesignated Fund Balance to help the center in the upcoming fiscal year.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Naabik'íyáti' Committee accepted the report with a vote of 11-0.

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